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ABSTRACT

During the first decade as a republic we have made some great strides in education, but in certain respects we have also fallen behind. As there are differences of opinion about what our most urgent educational priorities are, I have tried to make this a balance sheet, showing assets and liabilities without pronouncing judgment on which side is the greater. There has been one overriding and permanent gain during the past decade: there is a greater appreciation throughout the land of the importance of education as one of organized society's chief concerns. As yet, spending on education has not accordingly increased. In 1971, the Human Sciences Research Council calculated that during the 10 years ended in 1967, government spending increased at the rate of 9.6 percent per annum, education spending at the rate of 9 percent per annum. We are at present spending about 4 percent of our gross national income on education. This is the same percentage we spent in 1953. Undoubtedly, much more could be improved if more money became available for education. Only a shortage of funds has caused a fairly considerable lag in providing school buildings for white children in the Transvaal. An even more serious shortage of accommodation exists in colored schools, where the number of pupils accommodated in double sessions has trebled in four years. (Author/JM)

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EDUCATION 1961 - 1971: A BALANCE SHEET

By
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EDUCATION 1961-1971: A BALANCE SHEET

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F. E. AUERBACH

During the first decade as a republic we have made some great strides in education, but in certain respects we have also fallen behind. As there are differences of opinion about what our most urgent educational priorities are, I have tried to make this a balance sheet, showing assets and liabilities without pronouncing judgement on which side is the greater.

There has been one overriding and permanent gain during the past decade: there is a greater appreciation throughout the land of the importance of education as one of organized society's chief concerns. Many of our leading newspapers now have education correspondents; leaders of commerce, industry and government appreciate more and more that the training of manpower is an essential ingredient of successful economic operation and that successful industrial training can only be built on a sound foundation of general education. In short, the community in general — and that includes almost all its sections — is taking an ever increasing interest in education.

As yet, spending on education has not increased at a rate to reflect this increased appreciation of the value of education in our scale of national priorities. In 1971, the Human Sciences Research Council calculated that during the ten years ended in 1967, government spending increased at the rate of 9,6% per annum, education spending at the rate of 9.0% per annum.

A similar picture emerges when we look at our national income: we are at present spending about 4% of our gross national income on education. This is the same percentage we spent in 1953. From about the same percentage in the mid-fifties, Holland's figure has risen to 7,6%, Britain's to 6,8%, that of the United States to 6,4%. Canada's 6,1% in 1960 has

risen to 9.6%, Zambia's 2,8% in the same year to 7,8%. Thus, since we rank education no higher in our scale of national priorities than we did almost two decades ago, we are undoubtedly lagging behind in international comparisons in this field.

Before going into detail we must realise that increased expectations and snowballing populations have created a world-wide education crisis: everywhere governments are struggling to train enough teachers and to erect enough buildings to cope with rapidly rising school enrolments. Excluding mainland China, world enrolments at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels taken together have risen from 324 million in 1960 to 460 million only eight years later!

Pupils

In South Africa, while our total population increased by 32½% in a decade, the total school enrolment in the same time has risen almost twice as much — by 62½%, and in 1970 stood at 4,32 million.

Our greatest gain has been the much larger number staying on at school, and the increased number going to university. Most people agree that more education enriches each student, as well as his or her community and the country as a whole, both mentally and economically.

In all population groups, more pupils are staying on at school. Of every 100 White pupils who started school in 1945, 29,4 were in Standard Ten eleven years later; of the 1957 starting group, 55.6 reached Standard 10. This doubling in a dozen years is a remarkable achievement, coupled with a rise in university student enrolment from 38 000 in 1960 to 73 000 in 1970 — a third of this number are now studying by correspondence through Unisa.

Among our African, Coloured and Asian population groups, too, a significantly larger number is succeeding at the higher levels of education. Taking the three groups together it is important for all to realise that in 1970, 27 770 African, Coloured and Asian students obtained their Junior Certificate, and 4 670 passed Standard 10. In 1970 there were 11 650 Black, Coloured and Asian university students; 5 200 of them were studying by correspondence.

The following table will show how the holding power of Non-White schools has improved:

TABLE 1:

Holding power of schools for African, Coloured and Asian pupils: 1945, 1957 and 1962.

(Starting groups: percentage of 100 pupils in Sub-Std. A reaching Stds. 6 and 10).

	Percentage reaching Std. 6			Percentage reaching Std. 10	
	1945 Group	1957 Group	1962 Group	1945 Group	1957 Group
Asian	36,2	61,1	66,2	5,6	14,5
Coloured	18,8	32,2	33,9	1,6	2,7
African	14,5	23,9	25,7	0,4	0,8

(The 1962 starting group has not yet reached Std. 10).

These figures show much improvement, but must be compared with 55,6% of White entrants in 1957 reaching Std. 10, as mentioned before. That the drop-out rates are still very high, especially among Coloured and African pupils, is obvious; even in Indian education, which shows the healthiest "pyramid", 21,4% of the 1962 beginners still dropped out before reaching Std. 4. In Coloured education, the corresponding figure was 50,5%: only half the pupils reached the sixth year of school.

In 1951 the Eiselen Commission hoped that by 1959 four years' attendance of African pupils would be general if not compulsory, especially since, in its view, "a Bantu child who does not at least complete Std. 2 has benefited so little that the money spent on his education is virtually lost". In the past decade, the number in Sub-A in Bantu education has risen from 393 000 to 645 000, yet the percentage of beginners who reached Std. 2, which was 55,3 in 1960, had improved to only 56,0% in 1970. Just over a quarter million of the 1967 beginners had dropped out before reaching Std. 2 in 1970.

Only some form of compulsory school attendance could make an impact on this problem. It is only fair to state that in other areas of Bantu education there has been remarkable improvement; the number at high school has risen from 43 500 in 1960 to 122 500 in 1970.

If we look at the upper levels of African, Coloured and Asian education — and we must if these developing groups are increasingly to provide the skills needed in their own communities — the picture is as follows:

TABLE 2:

Std. Ten Results and University Enrolments.

	Std. 10 passes				University students	
	All Std. 10		Univ. entrance passes			
	1959	1969	1959	1969	1960	1970
Asian	413	1 400	178	426	1 670	3 470
Coloured	608	1 446	206	413	930	1 880
African	430	1 728	137	869	1 780	4 580
Sub-total	1 451	4 574	521	1 708	4 380	9 930
White	16 855	32 322	9 586	13 456	37 930	73 200
Total	18 306	36 896	10 107	15 164	42 310	83 130

African, Coloured and Asian South Africans now constitute 82½% of our population; in the last decade, they have increased both their share of Std. 10 passes and of university enrolment from 8% to 12%.

It will be seen that as far as pupils' progress is concerned, there have been advances on many fronts, yet the leeway to be made up is still enormous.

Until recently, the bulk of Coloured and Asian pupils had to buy their own books and stationery; all of them are now supplied with these, as are White pupils up to Std. 10. African pupils do get some books supplied, but still have to buy most of them. State expenditure on books works out at about R6 per White, R2,5 per Coloured and Asian and 46 cents per African pupil.

Teachers

If we look at improvements in the position of teachers, the decade has been fruitful in many ways. White teachers' salaries have, roughly, doubled in the last decade; those of Coloured and Indian teachers have risen

50-60%. The ratio of their salaries to those of Whites has dropped from nearly 80% at similar levels of qualification to about 60%. Naturally, all these figures are approximate, as there are variations at different levels. Improvements in African teachers' salaries, whose scales had not been revised from 1947 to 1963, have also been quite substantial, amounting to 50-60% at the start, and doubling — like White salaries — at the maximum levels. On an average, they still earn only 45% of White salaries for equivalent qualifications

For all teachers, the number and grades of promotion posts have increased; non-African teachers have to pay only half as much in pension contributions as they did previously, with the State bearing a larger share. A pension scheme for all African teachers was first introduced in 1967, though those in the Cape and in Natal had had one before 1954. Lower scales for teachers in farm schools have been abolished, and African high school principals now have scales, though those in primary schools are still paid only teachers' salaries with a ~~minimum~~ maximum principal's allowance of R21 a month.

Teachers also now enjoy improved leave conditions, including study leave; more bursaries are available to them, and non-African teachers are eligible for housing loans and subsidies.

The number of student teachers in all population groups has been inadequate, as has been the case in many other parts of the world. The position in African education, however, gives cause for special concern, for the percentage of unqualified teachers has risen from 7,2% in 1961 to 19,4% in 1970, from 1 979 to 6 991 teachers. Of some extra twenty thousand teachers employed during the past nine years, 5 800 were without professional or matriculation qualifications. And, sadly, the number of qualified African teachers with a degree — to serve more than 120 000 high school pupils — has only risen from 656 to 717 in the same period.

The Transvaal has followed Natal's lead in allowing married women teachers to apply for permanent posts — and hence for promotion as well; almost four thousand, about two-thirds of the province's married women teachers, have joined the permanent staff. The same improvement has become available to African, Coloured and Asian married women teachers, though not yet to White ones in the Cape and the Orange Free State.

The Control of Education

Numerous changes in the control of education have occurred within the past decade. The transfer of technical and commercial high schools

to the provinces has been generally welcomed, ending a 45-year division in secondary education which all concerned considered unsound. Two new universities for Whites have been opened, one of them at Port Elizabeth, the country's first bilingual university for full-time students. The university colleges for African, Coloured and Asian students have become fully-flegded universities, though many rules restrict their students far more severely than is the case with White students.

The creation of separate education departments for Coloured and Asian pupils has been welcomed by some and opposed by others; in Bantu education, the new homelands education departments are now the employers of their teachers, who generally prefer this to being hired and fired by local school boards, as is still the case for African teachers outside the Bantu homelands.

The establishment of the National Education Council has raised both hopes and doubts: certainly it was unfortunate that the body had to be reconstituted three times in eight years. The training of White high school teachers is being undertaken in universities as from 1972; many thoughtful teachers regret that these student teachers will now no longer be trained in the same institutions as their primary school colleagues This may increase misunderstandings between primary and high school teachers, though one hopes that the Colleges of Education will be linked with the universities in some way in the future.

As some of the most highly centralised education systems in the world have moved away from centralisation since 1945 — France, the Soviet Union and the German Federal Republic are prominent examples — some people have doubted the wisdom of greater centralisation in our country. Certainly the 1967 National Education Policy Act was a centralising measure. That it introduced a uniform school entry and school leaving age for White children throughout the country was wise; the wisdom of preventing even competent pupils by law from switching from their mother tongue to the second official language as a medium of instruction at least somewhere along their path to citizenship of a bilingual country must remain in doubt.

The Spirit of Education

In November, 1971, the "Christian" and "National" characters of education mentioned in the 1967 National Education Policy Act, were defined in a Government Gazette. Yet a "Christian character founded on the Bible" does not really bridge the divergence between "Christian according to the creed of the three Afrikaans churches" and "Christian according to those Christian tenets broadly acceptable to all Christian

denominations". And the "broad national charcater", rather wordily defined, and intended "to inculcate a spirit of patriotism and responsibility towards the fatherland, its soil and its natural resources" does little to reconcile that patriotism which instils an Afrikaner national identity with one embracing all White South Africans; or should "broadly national" comprise all permanent inhabitants of the Republic, as many South Africans might affirm, without denying any groups the right to separate cultural identity within this framework?

Can we resolve such conflicts of outlook? Have we made any progress in inter-group attitudes? Or is the view expressed by Professor H. J. Bingle — then Vice-Chairman of the National Advisory Education Council — still valid? On Republic Day, 1962, he said that English- and Afrikaans-medium schools are unfortunately named, "as if only the media of these schools differed from each other. The two schools differ from each other in respect of literally everything in the school".

Has our standard of bilingualism improved? Or was Dr. E. G. Malherbe right in suspecting that fear of the standard having fallen caused the exclusion of the traditional question about knowledge of the second official language from the 1970 census forms? Can we be satisfied with the standard of competence generally achieved in the second language by our pupils after they have spent twelve years learning it, and have spent almost as much time on this as they have on learning their mother-tongue?

Ten years ago, in a detailed investigation, I found a wide divergence of interpretation in different history textbooks — a reflection of Professor Bingle's view on the profound differences between English- and Afrikaans-medium schools. Though such committees have worked successfully with history experts from different nations in many parts of the world for many years, in South Africa we still have no private or public committee that attempts to reconcile divergent interpretations of history before they are printed in school books.

In the critical matter of racial attitudes, unhappy incidents that hurt those affected and harm our country's reputation are still too frequent; perhaps schools, which often reflect parents' attitudes, will soon act on the Prime Minister's suggestion that we should conduct a national campaign against rudeness.

Educational Renewal

The content and method of education are everywhere in the process of renewal. "New mathematics", language laboratories, improved methods

of teaching reading, the first steps in introducing closed-circuit television and video-tapes — these are only a few examples. Syllabuses in all education departments have been revised and co-ordinated, and the need for regular revision is now generally accepted.

Perhaps more significant is the fact that all education departments and most teachers now accept that even experienced teachers need to attend refresher courses from time to time in order to learn about new methods and new ideas in their special fields. Even principals have attended courses to improve their skills in human relations, educational leadership and administrative competence! The Bantu Education Department has established the country's first independent in-service training college for teachers, with accommodation for those who come from all corners of the land to attend week-long courses there.

Another example of educational progress is the Transvaal's matriculation project, now in its fifth year. Largely owing to the initiative of Mr. A. J. Koen, then Director of Education, 20 high schools for White pupils in the province are awarding their own final marks to their Std. 10 candidates. Not more than half these marks come from the final examinations, which are marked and set by the school staffs themselves. I know from personal experience that this project has improved the ability of many of the teachers involved to encourage independent work by their pupils, to set, measure and maintain adequate academic standards in tests and examinations (a matter far more difficult than most outsiders realise) and to accept the ultimate responsibility for their pupils' final results.

The project's biggest handicap is certainly the fairly high staff turnover, which, of course, affects all our schools; for all Transvaal schools it is probably about 25% per year.

Conclusion

Summing up, we may note much progress, much renewal, many improvements — and many unresolved conflicts which perhaps merely show that the schools mirror "the world outside". No doubt I have left out a few important matters. Undoubtedly, much more could be improved if more money became available for education. Only shortage of funds has caused a fairly considerable lag in providing school buildings for White children in the Transvaal. An even more serious shortage of accommodation exists in Coloured schools, where the number of pupils accommodated in double sessions has trebled in four years (1966: 13 400; 1970: 41 300).

The shortage of 700 classrooms in Soweto alone has recently been highlighted, and, laudably, some 55 have been built from public subscrip-

tions made within less than five months. And only shortage of funds in the past can explain the rise in the percentage of privately paid teachers in African schools (excluding church schools) from 4,9% in 1957 to 17,8% in 1969, numerically from 1 187 to 6 207. The burden on a poor community having to pay more than 6 000 teachers out of their own pockets, over and above taxation and school levies, must have been heavy, but it shows the parents' interest in education — found everywhere in South Africa. Happily the Bantu Education Department has now taken over the payment of 3 200 such teachers outside the homelands from October, 1971.

Some of the sound foundations laid during the past decade will certainly bear fruit in the next ten years. Clearly, education will continue to have to compete for both money and staff with other sectors of the country's economy; yet if we dedicate ourselves to the aims of education as set out in the Transvaal, then the country's 110 000 teachers, responsible for 4¼ million pupils, should be able to lead the young towards hopeful horizons. The Ordinance states: "Education shall be so planned as to foster national unity and racial co-operation in South Africa".